

THE PROBLEM OF MEMORY IN THE CONTEXT OF NIETZSCHE'S HISTORICAL THEORY

Key words: History and Memory, Collective Memory, Forgetting, Will to Power, Will to Destruction, Monumental History, Aantiquarian History, Critical History, Historical, Unhistorical, Overhistorical.

The issue of time and memory has its permanent place in the panorama of historiographic changes. Interconnected with the concepts of "historical time" and "historical memory" there are nowadays many new research discourses evolving around it. These activated transformations are connected with theoretical explorations, which regularly try to solve the problems encountered by the historical science. In general, polysemy is the characteristic feature of time and memory at large. Herewith, in the structure of the postmodern historical science these concepts have acquired pivotal meaning, especially as they are recently perceived as a "voluntary and interpretative".

For a modern historiographer Friedrich Nietzsche's perspective is interesting not only for its unusualness, but also for the actuality of the observations it makes. It is noteworthy that Nietzsche was the first to come up with the issue of the concept of the historical time, in the ontological rather than gnoseological perspective within the historical terms (it was widely presented in his "Philosophy of Life" (*Lebensphilosophie*)). The problem of the correlations between the concepts of "memory" and "forgetting", undergoing some changes in the historical science at the end of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century, is not only being revalued in the context of Nietzsche's historical range, but is also acquiring a non-classical perception of concepts.

In order to make it perceptible we consider it necessary to discuss the topic from the following standpoints: First, we discuss Nietzsche's historical range as a "turned" Platonism. To make it clear we try to outline

the Platonic comprehension of "cognition" and "memory". Then we give Nietzsche's perception of concepts "memory" and "cognition" in a combination. We emphasize the concept "forgetting", which is no longer perceived only from the point of view of erasing of knowledge. That is to say, we presume "forgetting" as a reserve, a condition to perceive the new. For this reason we apply the genealogical method suggested by Nietzsche as it makes possible to bring the concepts of history and memory together.

Plato is one of those thinkers, whom Nietzsche referred to most often (besides *Arthur Schopenhauer*). Moreover, he was the second thinker after Ralph Waldo Emerson, whose influence is evident on his work¹. Interestingly, being under the influence of Plato, Nietzsche outlines in the starting point of his work the commitment to withstand the thinking of Plato². Later he will characterize his thinking as a "turned" Platonism:

"My Philosophy is the *turned Platonism*: the more we move away from the true accommodation, so it is very clean, beautiful and well. Life in illusion as a goal"³.

Referring to Martin Heidegger's definition of this topic⁴, let us clarify the nature of such "turning" in terms of the memory, in general and in the historical perspective, in particular. In other words, let us try to answer the question: which is the essence of the relationship between the history and the memory for Plato and for Nietzsche?

First, note that for Plato the memory as knowledge and an object of cognition is a concept for his teaching about being. So, his philosophy about memory, knowledge and cognition is also about memory and history. This point of view opens an interesting perspective in his

¹ See *More Details*: Thomas Brobjer, *Nietzsche's Wrestling with Plato and Platonism*, in Paul Bishop (Ed.), *Nietzsche and Antiquity. His Reaction and Response to the Classical Tradition*, Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2004, p. 241-246.

² Thomas Brobjer, *Nietzsche's Wrestling with Plato and Platonism*, in Paul Bishop (Ed.), *Nietzsche and Antiquity. His Reaction and Response to the Classical Tradition*, Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2004, p. 241.

³ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1869-1874* (Kritische Studienausgabe in 15 Einzelbänden, 7), Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1988, p. 199.

⁴ Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche. / Erster Band*, Pfullingen : G. Neske Verlag, 1961, p. 231.

dialogue called "Menon", which is considered as a major work for the shaping of the Platonic philosophy. This particularly refers to the central part of the dialogue when, "for the first time it's given the Platonic definition as a recollection process, which is one of the most stable baseness"⁵.

In general, the Platonic theory is especially important for its first formulation of the concept of indigenous knowledge. Therefore, according to the concept, the soul already knew everything what it should know even before its present embodiment; the search of knowledge and action are innate nature of the soul, which are only sleeping till revived. On the other side, as the natural phenomena are related to each other, any recollection of the soul implies the knowing of the rest, which is hidden there.

In general, memory is crucial for knowledge and cognition. Moreover, Plato views it in contrast with the written word. In other words, in Plato the written word is viewed as a replacement of the memory, and is not yet realized as an extension and complement to memory.

As opposed to Plato, Nietzsche emphasizes on **forgetting**, because it helps to live, so in this context, for Nietzsche it is important not the ontological point of view of the theory of reality, but the genealogy using that term not just to understand aspects of the kind and the origin (genea), but rather the making in it (genome). The concept of genealogy is important, because it makes possible to hide even the "running" meaning of existence.

As it is noticed by Aronson:

"The Genealogy deals with a system of masks, games and secrecies, which are inalienable features of the world. It reads the hidden signs, arising in their direct state of the given, the signs, which we do not notice, as the "essence", being the value of our thinking, makes us follow its depth and pushes to see the invisible space inside. This way the hidden signs indicate the collision lines and the symptoms"⁶.

⁵ М. Канто-Спербер (отв. ред.) - *Греческая философия*, Т. I, М.: Греко-латинский кабинет Ю. А. Шичалина, 2006, с. 236.

⁶ Олег Аронсон, *Игра случайных сил*, в книге – Жиль Делез, Ницше и философия, М.: Ад Маргинем, 2003, с. 11-12.

The thing is that each value has its genealogy, on which depends the honesty and humiliation of what it offers us as subjects of faith, feeling and thinking. And in this context it once again highlights the "will of power" as a genetic element, which contains the value of values and the meaning of meanings. As Nietzsche proposes, the new requirement is the need to critique the moral values and the concepts of "history" and "memory", as values are once again under the question. The most interesting thing here is that the genealogy, as a deep thinking and a haughty glance, does not oppose to history, but denies historical extensions of the cultural meanings.

Combining the historical and the structural relationships and the value preferences the author refers to the formula of principles of the "ethics of not forgetting", as a type of relationship between I and the Other.

Nietzsche suggests valuable and practical standpoints in the field of history. The problem of "historical sense", which is a discussion topic in the "*On the Use and Abuse of History for Life*", is of no less significance. Interestingly, instead of emphasizing the role of history as a starting topic of discussion Nietzsche views the "historical sense" as a shortage, and then, as a "historical excess". In other words, he starts his philosophy in the frontiers of knowledge⁷.

But we would like to discuss the main problem by reflecting on part 73 of Nietzsche's "*Gay Science*". The quote below is from Nietzsche's fables and is titled "The Holy Cruelty", which we present unabridged:

"*Holy cruelty*.- A man who held a newborn child in his hands approached a holy man. "What shall I do with this child?" he asked; "it is wretched, misshapen, and does not have life enough to die." "Kill it!" shouted the holy man with a terrible voice; "and then hold it in your arms for three days and three nights to create a memory for yourself; never again will you beget a child this way when it is not time for you to beget." -When the man had heard this, he walked away disappointed, and many people reproached the holy man because he had counseled cruelty; for he

⁷ M. Marder, *History, Memory, and Forgetting in Nietzsche and Derrida*, in *Epoché*, Volume 9, Issue 1 (Fall 2004), p. 138.

had counseled the man to kill the child. "But is it not crueler to let it live?" asked the holy man"⁸.

There is a number of expressions in the fable which are of particular interest for us: first, the phrase "...it is wretched, misshapen, and does not have life enough to die"; second, it is: "Kill it! And then hold it in your arms for three days and three nights to create a memory for yourself"; and finally, "...never again will you beget (zeugen) a child this way, when it is not time for you to beget (zeugen)".

Worth mentioning, those three expressions coincide with the three models of history, developed by Nietzsche – the Monumental, the Antiquarian and the Critical.

Thus, in the work "*On the Use and Abuse of History for Life*" Nietzsche separates these three types of the history and gives definitions to them. Without going into the details, we would like to give their basic outline.

Accordingly, owing to the *Monumental history*, people learn to understand the significant events, which have had influenced their past and their present. Additionally, the monumental memory (along with the monumental time) growing within the context of the monumental history almost always keeps those events in exaggerated and distorted ways.

In the case of the *Antiquarian history* the keeping and worshipping of the past is important. With the antiquarian memory (along with the antiquarian time) there is no differentiation of the primary and the secondary, and the vision is very limited. Here there is a case of history distortion as well.

In the case of the *Critical history* there is a will of refusal from the past and the present (and the future) hardships and deprivations. Such refusal is a necessary condition for development.

Here Nietzsche's following aphorism is worth mentioning:

"“I did that” says my memory. I couldn't have done that – says my pride, and stands its ground. Finally, memory gives in”⁹.

⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science: With a Prelude in Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs* b; translated, with commentary, by Walter Kaufmann, Vintage Books, March 1974, p. 129.

⁹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, translated by Judith Norman and edited by Rolf-Peter Horstmann, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 59.

This aphorism is a most contradictory one. But we can understand that contradiction between the “memory” and the “pride”, particularly if viewed within the context of “*The Eternal Recurrence*”, when the same returns though changed. Here the memory-act recurs as pride-value. In other words, in contrast to monumental and antiquarian history-memories, in case of which, as a rule, the present is subjugated to the past, we deal with liberation of the present. However, this transition-refusal does not happen as easily, because in Nietzsche’s point of view we, knowing the best, are not able to move from cognition to action.

In general, the first two of them are displayed in completely different contexts of the will, rather than in the case of the critical. Therefore –

“To teach humanity its future as its *will*, as dependent on a human will, to prepare for the great risk and wholesale attempt at breeding and cultivation and so to put an end to the gruesome rule of chance and nonsense that has passed for “history” so far (the nonsense of the “greatest number” is only its latest form): ¹⁰”.

Nietzsche mentions the problem of hierarchy, for the hierarchy, as something inseparable from the genealogy, is what he calls “our main problem”. Hierarchy is the originary fact, the identity of difference and origin¹¹.

Based on this we would like to separate two major development processes of the memory (and in general, the history and the time): The first: the “*Will to Destruction*”, and the second – the “*Will to Power*”.

The first part contains Christianity and Platonism (Socraticism). In the case of the second, it is the Dionicism¹². In other words, it is the memory of the Lord and the memory of the Slave. And the task of the history or a historian is to liberate the Lord’s memory from the Slave’s memory, which is a burden of history.

Fabulous memory is based on a constant repetition when nothing is changed; the world and the life are given finally here, and are finally explained.

¹⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, translated by Judith Norman and edited by Rolf-Peter Horstmann, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 91.

¹¹ Жиль Делез, Ницше и философия, М.: Ад Маргинем, 2003, с. 45.

¹² See Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*. Out of the Spirit of Music, Translated by Ian Johnston, Publisher: Arlington, VA : Richer Resources Publications, 2009, p. 14.

But the historical memory rests on the principle of the eternal return, when the same returns with differences. And as the history is not a science, so the historical memory has to deal with art.

At this stage we can already approach Nietzsche's historical-theoretical side, the treatment problem of "the historical disease":

"History, so far as it serves life, serves an unhistorical power, and thus will never become a pure science like mathematics. The question how far life needs such a service is one of the most serious questions affecting the well-being of a man, a people and a culture. For by excess of history life becomes maimed and degenerate, and is followed by the degeneration of history as well"¹³.

Thus, Nietzsche separates three temporal dimensions of history: historical (*Historisch*), unhistorical (*Unhistorisch*), overhistorical (*Überhistorisch*) aspects. According to Nietzsche, unhistorical and overhistorical aspects are medicine for life, treatment of illness, while the historical one is the station of life. Thus, we can say that history leads to the "*will to destruction*", when non-historical and under-historical lead to "*will to power*".

Moreover, the Science lacks practice and science of medicine¹⁴. Care about non-historical feeling, according to Nietzsche, is a basis of wisdom, religion and art¹⁵.

But in the concept of historical reorganization, interesting are both the liberation of the present or its revaluation, and the problem of the investment of the rhythm into the past: "When one lets rhythm permeate speech – the rhythmic force that reorders all the atoms of a sentence, bids one choose one's words with care and gives one's thoughts a new color, making them darker, stranger, and more remote-the utility in question was superstitious." Simultaneously the "rhythm is a compulsion; it engenders an unconquerable urge to yield and join in"¹⁶. Is it impossible to make the memory also rhythmical? Certes! And Nietzsche's sense of

¹³ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*, Edited by Daniel Breazeale, translated by R. J. Hollingdale, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge, 2007, p. 67.

¹⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1869-1874*, p. 699.

¹⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1869-1874*, p. 698.

¹⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, p. 138-139.

rhythm is oblivion. And it is possible only in those, who are free from the burden of time and memory, who has only free thoughts, because:

"Their "knowing" is *creating*, their creating is a legislating, their will to truth is – *will to power*"¹⁷.

РЕЗЮМЕ

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ПРОБЛЕМА ПАМЯТИ В КОНТЕКСТЕ ИСТОРИЧЕСКОЙ ТЕОРИИ Ф. НИЦШЕ

В статье аргументируется, что историческая концепция Ф. Ницше тоже исходит из концепта "воли к власти". Особенно когда согласно теории Ницше само знание есть "воля к власти", поэтому концепция истории, времени и памяти Ницше тоже должно вытекать из этой концепции.

Но как всякий переворот, так и ницшеанская перевернутость по сравнению платонизма в конце концов осуществляется в форме возвращения, возвращения к платонизму, "по необходимости застревая в сущности того, против чего выступает". Иначе говоря, в противоположности "память - забвение" сперва видим перемещение акцента на забвение, а потом и уничтожение таких противоположностей вообще и установление забвения в самой структуре "следа памяти". Забвение не поддается осмыслению, но направлено на диалог, на встречу смыслов. И все это - на фоне вечного возвращения, где "похожий не степень тождественного, а что-то полностью различное".

¹⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, p. 106.

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Ֆրիդրիխ Նիցշեն մշակույթի համատեքստում (Գիտական հոդվածների ժողովածու)

Հայալեզու հոդվածների գիտական խմբագիրներ՝

Բ.գ.դ., դոցենտ Արա Առաքելյան

Բ.գ.թ., դոցենտ Սերգեյ Ստեփանյան

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Երևան
ԵՊՀ հրատարակչություն
2015

Jerewaner Staatliche Universität (JSU)
Fakultät für romanisch-germanische Philologie
Lehrstuhl für ausländische Literatur

Friedrich Nietzsche im Kontext der Kultur

Herausgeber der deutschen Aufsätze

Dr. Maike Schmidt (Kiel, CAU)

Dr. Tigran Simyan (Jerewan, JSU)

in Zusammenarbeit mit Simone Vrckovski

Jerewan
Verlag der JSU
2015

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Ֆրիդրիխ Նիցշեն
նշակույթի
համատեքստում



ԵՐԵՎԱՆԻ ՊԵՏԱԿԱՆ
ՆԱՄԱՆՍԱՐԱՆ